GROWING IMPACT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN IN SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL OF BRAND PROMOTION & CONSUMER AWARENESS: A PERCEPTION STUDY OF JAIPUR BASED MASS COMMUNICATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

Gone are the days when consumers were interested in verbal communication and simple advertisements to influence their buying decisions. In today's times of fierce business competition, one that is visually appealing is able to grab the attention of the buyers and sell in the market. According to graphic designers, "Since people are visual learners, they will remember your brand better when they see it visually, instead of hearing or reading about it."

The constant usage of graphic images over different social media platforms increases the visibility as well as the appeal of online social media messages which results in generating widespread brand recognition amongst the viewers, no matter whether they are interesting and informative blog graphics, attractive social media posts or any kind of online marketing materials posted on social media platforms. A graphic element can increase social media presence of a brand multi fold and add to its brand perception by helping to promote their business by connecting back to the website that was attached along with the post.

All popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Orkut & Linked In have been strong platforms being widely used by corporate organizations to popularize their products & services in a more effective manner by the use of effective images & contents, whether its profile pictures or wall posts, Graphic Design plays a major role in the making of such attractive & appealing contents.

To develop understanding about the various functions of graphic design of social media, a thorough review of existing studies would be employed in order to develop an overview about the significance of graphic design on social media sites as a branding tool and whether they have been successful in creating a differentiating and unique brand personality in front of customers. To further analyze the relevance of the topic the study would employ Survey Method and Questionnaires would be administered to a sample strength of 100 students of Journalism and Mass Communication who are regular users of various social media platforms and many a times their purchasing decisions are governed by social media contents which have high graphical representation.

Keywords: *Social Media, Graphic Designers, Attractive, Appealing, Mass Communication, Students*

Introduction

"Due to the rapid growth of social media, consumers are exposed to a barrage of Tweets, "Likes," texts and messages on the Web and on their mobile devices. With the need to read or view images in seconds -- as well as on smaller screens -- graphic design plays an increasingly important role not only in building brand awareness and recognition but in merely attracting the user's attention". (Smith, E., 2017)

Gone are the days when consumers were interested and influenced by verbal communication and simple advertisements to influence their perception of goods and services and their buying decision and to implement the AIDA principles in practice. In today's times of fierce business competition, one that is visually appealing is able to grab the attention of the buyers and sell in the market. According to graphic designers, "Since people are visual learners, they will remember your brand better when they see it visually, instead of hearing or reading about it."

Nobody would deny the fact that the quality of graphic design or the quality of the logo can greatly influence the mindset of the consumers contributing a great deal in just not drawing their attention but also in building credibility and trust amongst the consumers. The constant usage of graphic images over different social media platforms increases the visibility as well as the appeal of online social media messages which results in generating widespread brand recognition amongst the viewers, no matter whether they are amazing blog graphics, attractive social

media posts or any kind of online marketing materials posted on social media platforms. A graphic element can increase social media presence of a brand multi folds and add to its brand perception by helping to promote their business by connecting back to the website that was attached along with the post. Better quality graphics help in creating a very good image in the minds of consumers and its clients by making the social media platforms look more attractive. When we talk of social media, it's the question of viewing contents in a fraction of seconds and it is here that well thought of graphics play a major role in creating brand awareness, recognition and recall value. The team of graphic designers for various companies work as a team for creating significant and impressive social media presence by working as either content strategists and other online marketing professionals to give rise to a more lively, interactive and interesting picture.

All popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Orkut & Linkedin have been strong platforms being widely used by corporates to popularize their products & services in a more effective manner by the use of effective images & contents whether its profile pictures or wall posts, graphic design plays a major role in the making of such attractive & appealing contents.

Social media platforms like Tumbler, Instagram, Pinterest, Flicker, Istock are typically the sites which are famous for colorful posts and images and have become the most popular means for posting creative works of an organization in a very unique & innovative manner and all this has benefitted the companies in their brand promotion but however all this has become possible only because of the work of efficient graphic designers.

Various elements of graphics which add to visual appeal of companies

The present world of marketing is highly competitive and has become extremely visual dominated. In such times how can the marketers ensure that they are able to create a visually appealing branding strategy. In such situation social media and specially sites like pinterest, instagram, snapchat and their graphically significant visual contents have emerged as the only resort for their rescue as images are more read and better remembered and understood.

According to a study by Social Bakers, "Images on facebook constitute 93% of the most engaging posts compared with stating updates, links and event videos.

The chief elements of Graphic Design on social media which highly influences the mindset of the consumers drawing their attention towards their contents are:

a. **Consistent Color Palette**
   Every famous brand is recognized in the market by its unique & uniform color background. To create an influential impact in the mind of consumers, we find every successful brand making use of two to four colors in all their social media posts & all other types of marketing materials. Every color has its own meaning and conveys particular feeling like trust, progress, confidence, excitement, passion etc. The color should be rightly conveying the nature of the brand.

b. **Font pairings**
   A well chosen and uniformly used font is also very effective in portraying the brand personality of an organization and thus influencing the opinion of consumers. The size of
   font & its style can also be immensely significant in conveying a particular feel or meaning.

c. **Right imagery & filters**
   It has been rightly said, "Seeing is Believing", so images which are consistent & convey a specific theme have always been visually very eye grabbing for consumers. Brand filters have their own role & significance in the category of imagery as they add a level of consistency to marketing graphics

d. **Social Media Templates**
   Every company has to ensure that it follows a uniform template in all its social media posts. Creating a specific social media layout by following a particular template or a basic format is always helpful in deciding the placing of contents on social media in such a manner that it stays in the minds of consumers for a long time. In the present times where the attention span of people is decreasing, the role of visual branding & specially catchy & innovative images, font size & colors being used on social media have become all very important to grab attention as every brand is becoming day by day more and more active on social media. Well designed graphics have emerged as strong tools to convey a company's culture & its products in a better manner as their wide spread use in social media have been able to evoke the emotions of consumers and they have been able to relate to it if it is efficiently designed. The sites of some companies with their creative graphics specially images have been so effective that people have been driven to buy the products after visiting their page and thus they are far more effective and popular in comparison to ordinary advertisements.

   Objectives of the study
   Following are the objectives of the study
   1- To develop an in depth understanding about the various aspects of growing significance of graphics in social media as a tool of generating interesting and effective brand awareness.
   2- To study the different parameters which makes Graphic Design used in social media sites very unique & impressive.
   3- To validate the secondary data, the objective of the study is also to find out the perception of youth regarding the reason behind the growing impact of graphic design in social media as a tool of brand promotion & awareness

Research Methodology

Data Collection
The paper deals with a very contemporary subject highlighting the importance of graphic design being used on social media as the latest branding technique employed by almost all business organizations to grab the attention of consumers and to help in creating interesting brand visibility as well as brand recall. To develop understanding about the various functions of graphic design on social media a thorough review

of existing studies , articles was done in order to develop an overview about the significance of graphic design on social media sites as a branding tool and whether they have been successful in creating a differentiating and unique brand personality in front of customers.

To further analyze the relevance of the topic a Primary Research was done of students of Journalism and Mass Communication who are first of all consumers of various products and services and at the same time they are vivid users of social media. As a part of Primary Data Collection Method, a Survey was done through Questionnaire Method as a part of Quantitative Survey Method.

Sample Design

As a part of Survey Method, questionnaire was administered to 100 students of Journalism & Mass Communication who are regular users of Social Media and who understand the various dynamics of Graphic Design and its growing significance and advantages on Social Media as an attention grabbing tool for potential customers. The study employed Purposive Sampling Method in order to gather Primary Data to find out the perception of young students regarding the relevance and importance of Graphics on Social media and whether according to them it is successful in creating brand awareness in a more effective manner.. The respondents selected were youth falling in the age group of mostly 16-23 years who chiefly make use of social media for being updated about various companies and their brand products and their usages. The opinion of the respondents proved out to be very fruitful in the direction of analyzing whether youngsters feel that widespread usage of graphic design on social media sites add to the effectiveness and appeal of messages and postings of different companies finally influencing the perception of customers in a more stronger manner.

Findings and Analysis

Part-I: Personal Information

1. **Gender of Respondents**

Findings

Female respondents outnumbered their male counterparts in the study. Although the study was not done with a pre set criteria regarding the selection of respondents on the basis of gender but however female respondents turned out to be more in number which played a major role in understanding above all the perception of female students regarding the effectiveness of graphics in social media advertisements in terms of making them look more appealing and interesting
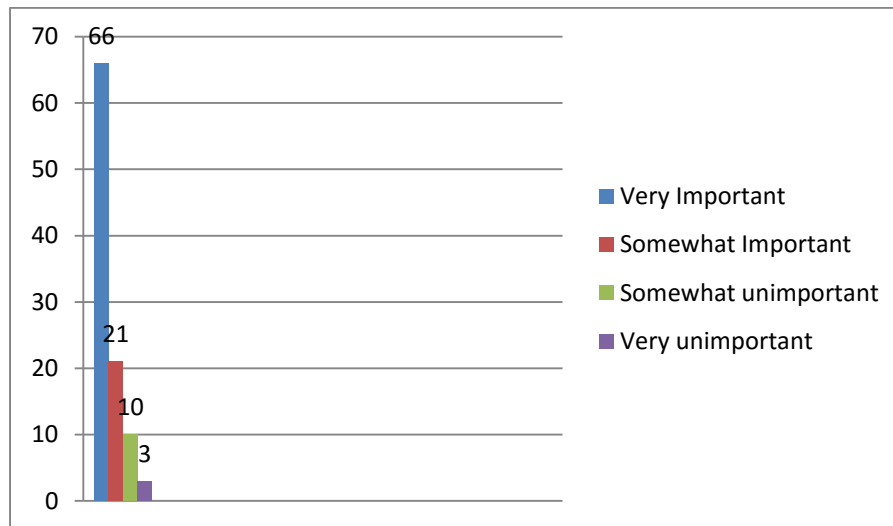
2. **Age of Respondents**

Findings

The outcome of the study revealed that just because the questionnaire was administered to young students who are mostly addicted towards social media and the purpose of the study was to know their perception regarding the impact of graphics on social media ads, therefore most of the respondents were teenagers falling in the age category of 16-20 years followed by the second highest number of them falling between 21-23 years and the least number of them in the category of 23 years and above. Hence the findings of the study was related to identifying chiefly the opinion of young respondents who are the biggest users of social media.

Part II:

**Q1. Response to the question, "**How important is Social Media to you?

Importance of Social Media to Respondents

Findings and Interpretation

The findings of the study revealed a major fact regarding the growing significance of Social Media in the lives of youngsters. The number of respondents who considered social media to be very important in their lives were more than half the total number. The second highest number of respondents, i.e 21 out of a total of 100 considered social media to be at least somewhat important in their lives pointing out towards the fact that if not very important but still social media had little importance for them. On the other side a very nominal number of respondents, only 13 out of 100 considered social media to be either somewhat unimportant or very unimportant stating clearly the fact that social media has become the strongest and the most widely used media by the youngsters in the direction of shaping and influencing their thoughts and decisions.

Q 2. Response to the question, "Which medium is more effective in the field of Corporate Advertising & Consumer Awareness?
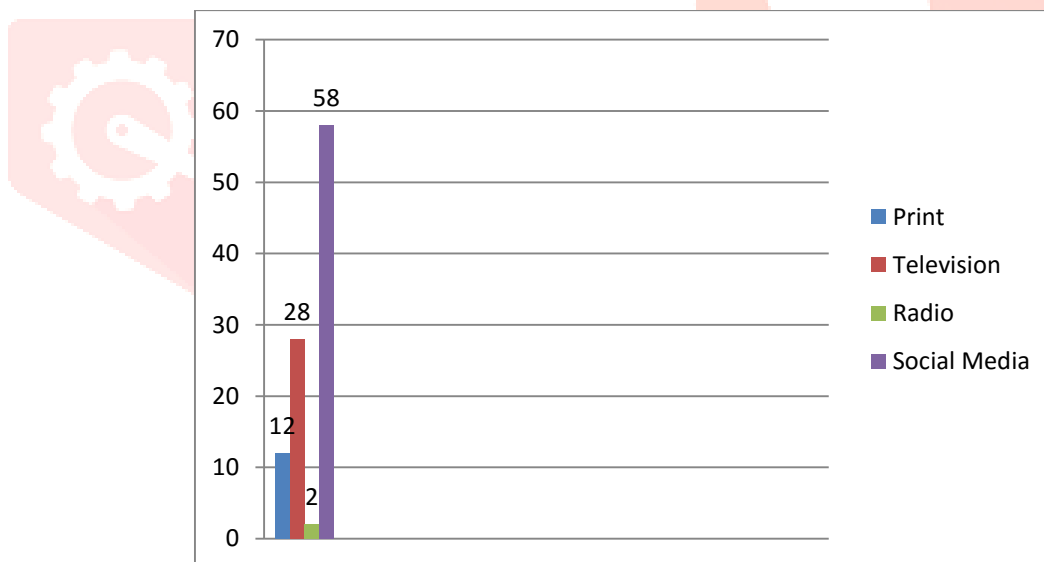
Effectiveness of medium in the field of Corporate Advertising and Consumer Awareness

Findings & Interpretation

The study concentrated on the effectiveness of graphics in making the social media ads more interesting and appealing. In this direction it was first and foremost very necessary to study how much importance the respondents gave to social media in comparison to various other types of traditional media. The responses were very interesting and factual as it revealed that more than half of the sample strength strongly felt that nowadays social media has emerged as the most preferred and most widely used platform in terms of Corporate Advertising and spreading Brand Awareness. The results clearly indicated that most of the potential customers nowadays are sufficiently well informed about the various products and services through social media and the advertisements which are displayed on it, thus acting as a strong tool of consumer education followed by television still being considered as a trusted and authentic medium.

Q 3. Response to the question, "Do you agree that Graphic Design makes an Ad visually more appealing on Social Media?

Graphic Design making an Advertisement visually more appealing on Social Media

Findings and interpretation

The results of the study was very significant in the direction of highlighting the effectiveness of graphic design in the direction of increasing the visual appeal of social media advertisements. Almost entire of the sample respondents strongly opined that graphic design has become an indispensable element of various types of social media advertisements as they felt that graphics add to the attraction element of ads calling for more attention and greater recall value. 88% of respondents considered that graphic design has emerged as the strongest tool of online brand promotion, specially amongst the youngsters as they get highly swayed away by flashy images, colors and fonts. 8% of the respondents didn't agree to the fact that graphic design has become very important in the present business world where almost everything has become online. A very nominal, i.e just 4% of the respondents were not clear about their response

Q 4. Response to the question, "Why social media graphics/advertisements are more popular than print graphics?
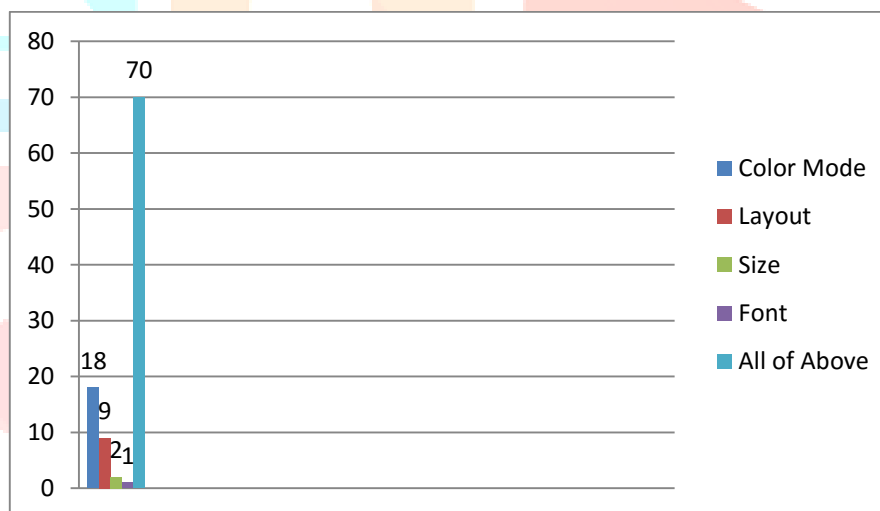

Reasons behind Social Media Graphics being more effective than Print Graphics

Findings and Interpretation

- The question was very significant in the direction of analyzing the role of Graphic Design on Social Media Advertisements. It was very important to know why did the respondents consider Social Media Graphics or advertisements to be more popular than Print Media Graphics. Various factors were listed which are essential elements of Graphic Design.
- 70% of the sample population considered that color mode, layout, size and font, all of them are equally important in increasing the visual impact factor of social media graphics to a far greater extent in comparison to Print Media. Moreover people like social media because it is a participatory and interactive platform which acts as a major drawback for print media.
- Hence because of multiple advantages of employing graphic design on social media content, most of the business organizations have resorted to its widespread application as a major marketing strategy. The more creative and interesting a website or a company's social media platform looks the more chances are there that you would be noticed in the crowd and that is the prime reason behind online graphics keeping the print media ones lagging behind.

Q 5. Response to the question, "Which do you value more about social media, the sending/sharing of information or receiving/viewing of information?
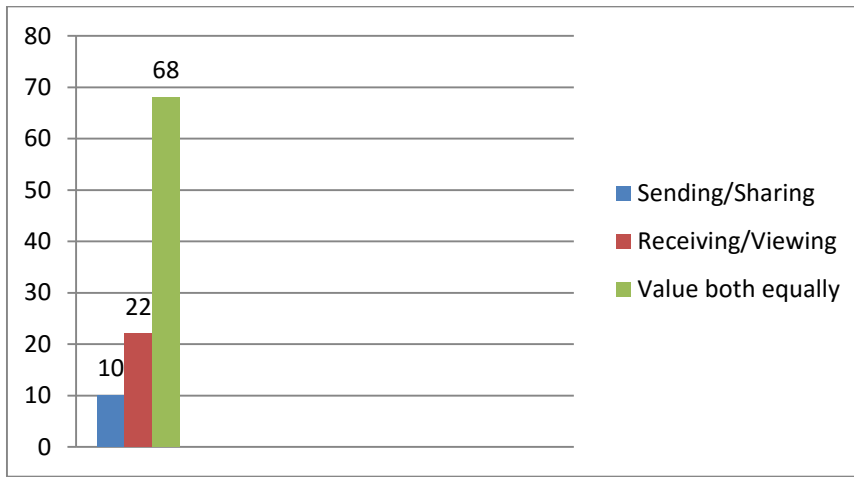
Aspect of Social Media valued the most by viewers/consumers

Findings and Interpretation

The response of the respondents regarding the above question was an eye opener as it brought before the nature of activity of the social media users. Majority of respondents expressed that they equally value both sharing/sending as well as receiving/viewing of information on Social Media pointing out towards a very prominent trend in regard to the usage of social media. It can be intrepretated from the findings that social media has become a perfect platform for two-way sharing of information and for all sorts of communication since people use it for viewing as well as sending and sharing of all sorts of information and this very fact makes social media the most widely used tool even by the marketing professionals to publicize their brands and above all their organizations and graphic design adds like an icing to the cake making the online content look more appealing and convincing for the viewers.

Q 6. Response to the question, " Which aspect of Graphic Design on Social Media advertisements appeal to you the most as a consumer?
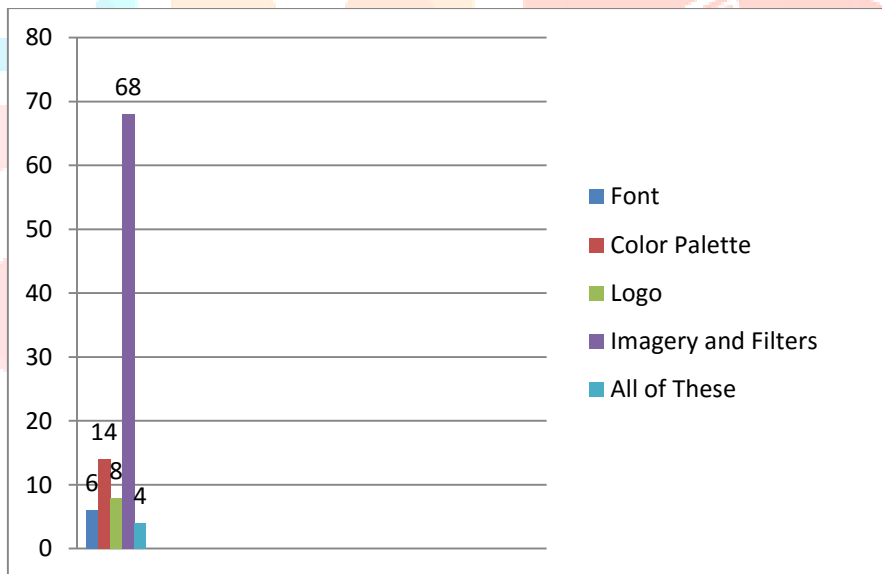
. **Aspect of Graphic Design on Social Media which appeals the most to Consumers**

Findings and Interpretation

- The study besides finding out the relevance of graphic design on social media also tries to analyze which aspect of graphic design on social media advertisements influence the mindset of the consumers to the greatest extent finally affecting their purchase decision.
- The findings strongly indicated that Imagery and Filters were considered to be the strongest aspect of graphic design which attracted the attention of the online social media users to the greatest extent as visuals and images have always had a long lasting impact on the perception of the customers. Second highest number was in favor of Color Palette as it was also considered to be a strong graphic design element which makes the social media content very interesting and unique. Remaining two aspects of graphic design, i.e Logo and Font secured less than 10% of the preference of the respondents

Q 7. Response to the question, "Which Social Media Platform is most effective and successful in terms of usage of Graphic Design?"

Most effective and successful Social Media Platform in terms of Graphic Design

Findings and Interpretation

- There is no doubt that the present youth are very much addicted to social media platforms whether its for entertainment or networking or to gain knowledge and awareness about certain issues. The study was intended to find out how graphic design is nowadays swaying away the opinion and response of the social media users and how much have they been successful in grabbing the eyeballs of the potential customers who are very active on social media. The responses of the sample population was greatly in favor of Facebook as the most influential and effective Social Media Platform in terms of application of graphic design, as 47% of the respondents gave their preference for Facebook. Second highest percentage was secured by Instagram (18%) and then You Tube(16%) and Pinterest(12%).
- No matter Twitter is also a very popular and widely used social media platform, however in terms of Graphic Design elements, it was successful in securing only 3% and Google Plus also received 4% preference in terms of preference in the area of most effective and successful social media platform to use Graphics.

Q 8. Response to the question, "How frequently do you use each of the above social media platforms?"

Frequency of usage of Social Media Platform

Findings and Interpretation

- The results of the study in regard to the question was quite expected as there is hardly anyone, specially the youngsters who don't make use of any of the widely used social media platform like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest or Twitter. Therefore as expected, almost the entire sample population fell in the category of regular users of social media , i.e using them few times a week.
- There were no respondent who fell in the range of once a week or once a month user of social media. The findings amply demonstrated that when people are regular users of social media then when graphic design is used to promote a product or service on social media, there are no doubts that the target potential customers would not be influenced by them.

Q 9. Response to the question, "Do you feel the type of software used behind Graphics in Social Media Ads play a major role in their appeal factor and effectiveness?"

Role of Graphics in affecting appeal factor of Social Media Ads

Findings and Interpretation

The findings revealed that it was just not the basic elements of graphic design like Imagery and Filters, Color Palette or Font which attract the attention of social media users but it was also the type of Graphic Design Software used behind making Social Media Ads which influenced the final outcome of the ads in terms of their appeal factor and their overall influence on the viewers and potential customers. A major percentage of respondents, 81% of them were of the opinion that the type of software used in graphic design greatly affects their attractiveness and the appeal factor.

Q 10. Response to the question, "Do you think social media graphics is a key area in the direction of Market Research conducted by corporate marketing professionals?"
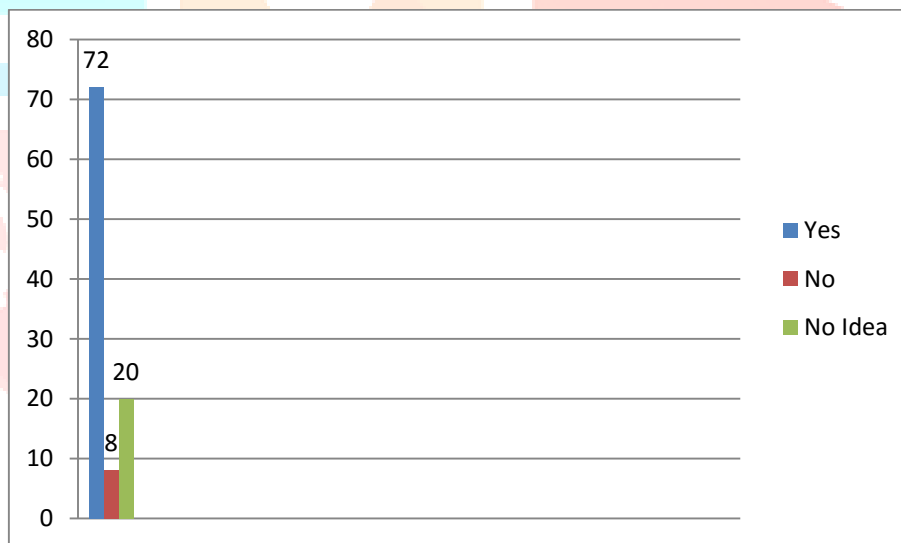
Social Media Graphics a key area of Market Research by Corporate Marketing Professionals

Findings and Interpretation

- The findings of this question was highly significant as it highlighted the significance of social media graphics emerging as a key area of market research conducted by the marketing professionals of various companies. Taking into consideration the fact that the responses of the sample respondents in the above questions reflected their strong support in terms of social media graphics as a growing tool for making online brand promotion more attractive and successful in terms of return on investment, it was very necessary to study their growing significance in the area of market research.
- Marketing professionals while conducting research about the growing preferences of customers, their liking and dislikes also consider the study of social media graphics as a key area to research on the significance and growing popularity of social media ads as a strong brand promotion tool for consumer awareness. 72% of the sample gave a great deal of importance to graphically dominated social media content by expressing their opinion that they strongly felt that the growing usage of graphics in social media ads and their increasing popularity amongst the social media users had emerged as one of the strongest areas of market research in today's competitive business scenario.

Conclusion

The paper with the help of secondary as well as primary data makes it very clear that no doubt Digital Media has changed the entire pattern of communication making it much more interesting, interactive as well as visually appealing and in this direction, Graphic Design has played a very crucial role in making the online media content look more attractive and convincing. The findings in which a perception study of the opinion of young mass communication students regarding the various dimensions of the growing significance of Graphic Design in making social media content and posts more eye catching was conducted, clearly revealed that the present young generation get highly clued to the various qualities of graphic design, no matter whether it's their font or color or images. The results made the fact very clear that social media and specially the employment of graphics on social media has become one of the most prominently used tool by corporate organizations for their brand promotion and brand recall of their products and services thus playing a significant role in influencing the perception of social media users in a more stronger and appealing manner. The paper explores a major area dealing with the growing impact of social media graphics and its increasing impact on the opinion of young consumers who spend most of their time on social media and get greatly hooked by the visual appeal of graphic design and its capacity of increasing the market penetration of the concerned organization, no matter whether it is the basic graphic design elements of the social media posts or logos but all play a key role in influencing the perception of social media users about the products or services. As rightly said by Smith, E.(2017), "A well-designed graphic can also stir the user to post links on his own social media pages; this directs potential customers back to the company's main website or starts a viral campaign with unlimited potential".

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